WORLD CHRONICLE

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PROGRAMME: **"WORLD CHRONICLE"**

GUEST: Mathias Lubega, Chief
Division of Southern Africa
U.N. Development Programme

JOURNALIST: Bhaskar Menon, PTI-TV, India
Obi Emekekwue, News Agency of Nigeria
Ian Steele, Press Foundation of Asia

MODERATOR: Michael Littlejohns

SYNOPSIS

Namibia's Needs in the Post-Independence Era

It's only a year ago that a new country joined the family of nations -- Namibia. Mathias Lubega, Chief, Division for Southern Africa of the United Nations Development Programme, UNDP, discusses the international assistance Namibia needs in the post-independence era. Learning from the mistakes of other African countries, Namibia adopted a pragmatic approach to win the support of the international community. Mr. Lubega notes that the most urgent assistance Namibia needs is in the fields of agriculture, rural development, health, education and housing.

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Executive Producer: Kamil Taha
Director: Livingston Hinckley
Production Assistants: Diane Barkley
Eloisa Ugalde

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VOICE From United Nations Headquarters in New York, this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**, an unedited interview programme about major global issues. Here now to introduce our guest is the host of today's **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

LITTLEJOHNS: I'm Michael Littlejohns and this is **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

It's only a year ago that a new country joined the family of nations - Namibia, formerly known as South West Africa. It's independence from South African rule came after a protracted war and after the successful United Nations supervised transition to full sovereignty. It's a vast land, largely desert, but with considerable mineral and agricultural potential.

Our guest today works for the United Nations Development Programme, the agency which is co-ordinating the U.N.'s assistance to post-independence Namibia.

He's Mathias Lubega, Chief of the Division for Southern Africa for UNDP. Mr. Lubega, a national of Uganda, will be interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Bhaskar Menon of PTI-TV of India; Obi Emekekwue of the News Agency of Nigeria and Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia. Mr. Lubega, welcome to **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Lubega, the population of Namibia is quite small - under two million - and as we've mentioned in the introduction, it's a very large country with very substantial mineral and agricultural resources. Logically, it should be a country with very considerable per capita income. Is that indeed the case?

LUBEGA: Yes, it is the case in some ways but not in all because, although Namibia is a rich country, most of the minerals are not owned by the nationals of the country. Most of the minerals are owned by foreign companies.

LITTLEJOHNS: But don't the foreign companies pay royalties or contribute in some other way to the costs of governing the country?

LUBEGA: They do pay but the government is still in the process of streamlining the type of royalties that they have today and this is bound to take some time before Namibia can reap the maximum fruits of the wealth of that country.

LITTLEJOHNS: A year or so after the independence date, is the country doing reasonably well? Is it meeting the targets that the U.N. Development Programme and indeed the government of Namibia set for the country?

LUBEGA: Yes, I think so. First of all, let me say that the President of Namibia, Mr. Sam Nujoma started off in a very encouraging way in the sense that his government has been using a very pragmatic approach. In the first instance, politically, you have a democratic constitution - I think one of the most democratic if not the most democratic in Africa. You have a limitation of a two term president's limitation. You have a free judiciary. There's no death penalty and free press and he has encouraged the multi-national nature, multi-racial nature of the country to be appreciated by all the population. Therefore, you have the confidence of the international community, private sector as well as the international donor community.

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LITTLEJOHNS: So private investors can go into Namibia with the assurance that they're going to make a reasonable profit?

LUBEGA: Yes, that is the case. The government has enacted an investment code which gives a very inviting environment for the private sector.

MENON: Mr. Lubega, Namibia is the last decade of the year 20th century a unique country and the political history that it's had and the state of political evolution that now it finds itself in. And, you yourself are from Africa, so the question I want to ask you is how different or how similar are the development problems of Namibia compared to those of other African countries?

LUBEGA: I think that Namibia is at an advantage in the sense that it has an opportunity to learn from the mistakes of the other African countries. I just mentioned, earlier on, for example, the democratic nature of their constitution as well as the multi-racial nature of the country and particularly the encouragement of private investment. Whereas, before independence everybody thought that SWAPO was the socialist-oriented party or movement.

LITTLEJOHNS: This is the independence movement that preceded independence?

LUBEGA: Precisely, South-West African People's Organization. Yes. Once they came to power, on the contrary they encouraged democracy,private sector, popular participation. In fact you could say that the system is bottom-up rather than bottom-down. I think one of the reasons for this is the lessons they have learned from the mistakes of other African countries that had independence before that.

MENON: Its proximity to South Africa and its deep linkages with South Africa must surely pose a unique set of problems?

LUBEGA: No. You know that South Africa at the moment is undergoing tremendous and unprecedented changes, as it were, for the better, and South Africa has been very cooperative in Namibia. In fact, Namibia belongs to the South African Customs Union and during the last Donor's Conference which took place in New York under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, South Africa pledged $10 million to assist Namibia at the time of its independence.

EMEKEKWUE: Mr. Lubega, going back to the Donor's Pledging Conference, nearly seven hundred million dollars was pledged in that Conference for the period of 1990 to 1998. Do you consider this amount adequate for the development needs of Namibia for the period?

LUBEGA: Let me first of all correct the figures in terms of the years. The amount which was pledged was $220 million for the year 1990 and $480 million for 1991-1993. I think this is fairly adequate especially as one of the main reasons for the Pledging Conference was to try to assist Namibia for the public sector budget deficit which has been fairly covered by this amount.

EMEKEKWUE: Can you tell us who the major donors were during the conference?

LUBEGA: There were mainly the western countries. You have the Scandinavian countries who are very supportive. It was mainly west European countries then the United States, in short.

STEELE: Mr. Lubega, given that Namibia is a new country with limited administrative experience and capacity and relatively little experience with the management of overseas assistance or with private sector entrepreneurs beyond the shores. Who is it in Namibia who sees to it that the country gets a fair deal? Who looks after Namibia's interest? Is there an organization within the country which is set up to handle, to administer, to monitor, vet foreign investment, for example, and keep an eye on the donors as well?

LUBEGA: Yes, that is true. They established a National Planning Commission. This is under the presidency and it is headed by a Secretary-General who is of a cabinet rank and they are receiving assistance from United Nations Development Programme with some experts to assist them, first of all, to follow up with the promised pledges during their Donors Conference and then also to monitor the type of assistance that is coming in and to have a database for the in-flow of aid from friendly donor countries.

STEELE: Is there any indication that Namibia would have more success than other African countries have had in saying "yes" or "no" or precisely identifying what it is they need, what they want - rejecting aid which might be more in the interest of the donors than in the interest of the country?

LUBEGA: I think this seems to be the trend because with the assistance that they are receiving from the United Nations system and especially with one co-ordinator, one macro-economist, that is, assisting this institution to assess the technical assistance that the country needs, to assess the available expertise that the country has and project what will be needed within the next five years. So with that I think it is possible and I'm sure the government wants to ensure that they will take in only that assistance that the country needs.

MENON: If you were looking at the Namibian economy from a development economist's perspective, what would you say is the single most important or overriding factor which you would have to take into account?

LUBEGA: During the Donor's Pledging Conference, the government of Namibia presented their most urgent needs or sectors and there were five. One was agriculture, second - rural development, third - health, fourth - education and the fifth - housing. These are the areas were they are now formulating policies to ensure that the resources that are at their disposal are geared towards alleviating the shortcomings in those areas.

MENON: Are there any factors that cut across these sectors? Are there any common factors? For instance, if you look at the per capita g.d.p. figure for the whole country, it's over a thousand dollars which is not bad for a developing country. In fact, it's quite good but if you break that down you get five percent of the population with an enormous per capita g.d.p.and 55% with $63. per year. Now does that impose a set of considerations that cut across the sectors and how are you dealing with that?

LUBEGA: Yes, that is a very interesting question. As a result of the apartheid system that was applied by South Africa in Namibia, you are correct that most of the wealth was in a few hands of the white settler Namibians and the black Africans or Namibians hardly had anything left including land. But what the government is trying to do is to ensure that whatever changes that take place are done in a pragmatic manner so that Namibians including the white Namibians, for instance, white farmers who owned commercial farms are not scared. So the government is addressing these issues but in such a way that

they would not be a disruption of the good progress that has started since independence. And this also applies to the education sector. For example, you'll find that 80% of the black Namibian teachers are not trained. We have a programme now with the United Nations whereby we are trying to upgrade the teachers in Namibia. You'll find that in the area of health, this was being run by South Africans who left after independence and the United Nations with other United Nations agencies such as UNESCO, WHO are trying to assist in these areas by bringing personnel from outside to assist.

LITTLEJOHNS: The programme is **WORLD CHRONICLE**. Our guest is Mathias Lubega, Chief of the Division for Southern Africa of the U.N. Development Programme. To continue the questions, let's go to Obi Emekekwue.

EMEKEKWUE: Mr. Lubega, you mentioned earlier on that the Namibian government inherited a life deficit from the outgoing South African administration. To what extent has it been possible to tackle the problems created as a result of this deficit, to date?

LUBEGA: Fortunately, during the Donor's Pledging Conference called by the Secretary-General of the United Nations, one of the issues that was addressed was the public budget deficit and the money that was pledged, part of it was addressed by the donors towards the budget deficit and this has gone a long way to ensure that the amount of deficit left is very small and incidentally, let me add - talking about the policy of the government - it has been very, very careful in so far as public resources are concerned. It is only trying to budget and spend in accordance with the money that is available by all means avoiding borrowing money from donors so the beginning is very encouraging indeed.

STEELE: Mr. Lubega, you mentioned in your 5 points, education. I take it, education includes human resources development, manpower skills. I'm wondering to what extent the shift from South Africans to international civil servants of one order or another has taken place? Has there in fact been a relocation? Has there been a significant move from white South Africans out of Namibia being replaced with other foreign assistance?

LUBEGA: Yes, to a certain extent. We must distinguish two issues here. You have South Africans who are working in Namibia and you also have white Namibians who are working in the government. Most of the South Africans who are from the South African Defense Forces that were working in health and education have left and those are being replaced by volunteers and technical assistants from the United Nations and also from bi-lateral sources. But, the white Namibians who are in government, in high posts within the government, those have remained and one of the policies is to ensure that they stay in their positions while also trying to bring in expertise from some of the Namibians that have the know-how from outside.

STEELE: To what extent is the administration dependent upon outside know-how to absorb the kinds of assistance that's being offered to administer and re-organize and take part in the re-structuring of the country. Is this largely a domestic exercise or is this something that is very heavily subsidized by those from outside the country?

LUBEGA: There is a great deal of technical assistance from outside, but from the United Nations system, as well as from bi-lateral donors - countries like Norway, Finland. They are playing a big role in this...also the Netherlands and all that. You also have private organizations,

NGO's and government organizations such as the Ford Foundation. They have a big role to play there.

STEELE: Is there any way of knowing how long this transition might take? At what point would it be likely to project that Namibia would take off more under its own manpower steam?

LUBEGA: Now this is very difficult to say, very difficult indeed.

MENON: You mentioned earlier that South Africa had adopted a very positive and supportive role in Namibia. To what extent does UNDP have contact with the South African government? Surely they must because as you said they've contributed 10 million. What is the nature of those contacts and from those contacts, do you see the South Africans looking at Namibia as a test case for themselves seeing that apartheid is on its way out?

LUBEGA: We do not have any direct contacts with South Africa because as you know they are some statutary U.N. rules that prevent us from doing that but, for example, the contribution of South Africa to Namibia's pledging conference was a direct sort of communication between the government of Namibia and that of South Africa. On the question of trying to learn something from Namibia for the South African present state and changes: this is taking place. We know that South Africa has been putting feelers not only in Namibia but also in other African countries to find out how they have been dealing with the development problems so that they can emulate some of the goods sides of those attempts that are being done in other countries, as well as trying to find out from international organizations how they are dealing with development problems.

MENON: On the official level, is there much contact between SWAPO and the ANC?

LITTLEJOHNS: The African National Congress in South Africa, I think he's referring to.

LUBEGA: Yes, the African National Congress of South Africa as well as the Pan-African Congress of South Africa, have a lot of contact with Namibia. In fact, I understand that sometime back the Vice-President of the African National Congress was in Namibia.

MENON: You mean Nelson Mandela?

LUBEGA: Nelson Mandela, yes, to attend the Southern African Development Co-ordinating Conference which is formed of 10 countries in the Southern African sub-region.

EMEKEKWUE: Mr. Lubega, Namibia remains strongly tied economically to South Africa. Are there any major efforts to break up this linkage of its dependence on South Africa?

LUBEGA: I think so. For example, Namibia still uses the rand, the South African currency as their money. But at the same time, with the assistance of the United Nations Development Programme, they are trying to develop - they are developing now their own Central Bank, with a view of starting their own currency within the next two years.

STEELE: You mentioned that the foreign investment code had been passed by parliament and that it's a welcoming document to outside enterprises. What sort of pick-up are you getting on Namibia? Are you getting a lot of interest from outside corporations or is it more interest from the same people who were already there before?

LUBEGA: Recently, there was a meeting, as a follow-up to the Donor's Pledging Conference. There was a meeting of the private sector. It was called the Private Sector Conference which was attended by private organizations, private companies from all over the world, from America, Canada, United States, Scandinavian countries, Germany, companies that have not been interested in Africa by and large but there is a lot of interest in Namibia.

STEELE: Are they mostly interested in the natural resources? Is there any manufacturing interest, any interest at all in developing an industrial sector?

LUBEGA: No, It is mainly in mining. Now there is a move to explore oil as well as gas. There's also a great interest in fishery. The fishing sector, I think, is one of those which is going to be very lucrative for Namibia. A World Bank study recently predicted that within 7 years, the gross domestic product of Namibia will double from the fishery sector alone.

MENON: Within Namibia now, what is the security situation and what for instance is the position of the black Namibians who worked with South Africa?

LUBEGA: I don't think there is any distinction whether someone worked with South Africa or not. There was an issue that was discussed by the government before independence and they decided that this is going to be a government of national reconciliation. That is why you find the government has black Namibians that worked with South Africa as well as white Namibians who worked with South Africa and the others who came from outside. There is no discrimination whatsoever.

MENON: How about the black members of the security forces which were used against SWAPO, are they also reconciled?

LUBEGA: I'm not aware that any measures were taken against it. I'm not aware of that.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Lubega, you've been pretty up-beat about the situation in Namibia. Surely there must be some weaknesses, weak spots which you have perhaps not identified for us. Can you mention some of them?

LUBEGA: That's a very good question. I think one of the biggest problems are - I did mention, for example, the problem they have with education, in the sense that the teachers, 80% of the teachers are not trained and again talking about education, you'll find that 65% of the population is illiterate. You'll find that 30 to 40% of the school-going age of children do not have places to go to school. In the housing sector, there is a need, a very great need to construct housing for the people.

LITTLEJOHNS: Mr. Lubega, I think you've identified some - we don't have enough time for you to go down the list. That's all the time we have. Thank you for joining us on this edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

Our guest has been Mathias Lubega, Chief of the Division for Southern Africa, UNDP. He was interviewed here at United Nations Headquarters in New York by: Bhaskar Menon of PTI-TV of India, Obi Emekekwue of the News Agency of Nigeria and Ian Steele of the Press Foundation of Asia.

I'm Michael Littlejohns, thank you for joining us. We invite you to be with us for the next edition of **WORLD CHRONICLE**.

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